

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2011-0051-EA

Lease/Serial Case File No.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Kingman Field Office (KFO)

Proposed Action Title/Type: Construction and maintenance of one non-motorized trail and the reclamation of one unauthorized trail.

Location of Proposed Action: T. 26 N, R. 18 W, Sec 34

Applicant (if any): Sue Baughman – Dolan Springs Open Space Committee (DSOSC)

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN:

This proposed action is in conformance with the Kingman Resource Management Plan approved March 1995.
Remarks:

RR09/V Within the Kingman Extended Recreation Management Area, develop day use/trailhead sites, trails, campgrounds and interpretive sites to meet the management objective of providing dispersed recreation opportunities. (Kingman Resource Management Plan approved March 1995 Alt. 2, pages 75-76, Table 8, page 78 and Table 16, pages 138-139).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

The purpose of the proposed action is to enhance recreational and educational opportunities adjacent to Dolan Springs, Arizona. The purpose of the proposed action would be to increase sustainable, non-motorized recreational opportunities on public lands adjacent to Dolan Springs, Arizona. The need of this trail would be to satisfy public non-motorized trail user needs while meeting the recreation management goals of the KFO BLM Recreation Program established under FLPMA.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Construct and maintain an approximately half mile loop interpretive nature trail and reclaim an existing unauthorized half mile trail that is currently unmaintained. The new trail is proposed to start from the visitor registration/parking area of the Antelope Canyon access to Mount Tipton Wilderness approximately four miles northeast of Dolan Springs, Arizona. The trail would make a small loop on BLM lands, outside of Mount Tipton Wilderness before returning to its origin at the existing bulletin board and visitor register (Refer to Attachment 1). Trail construction would include clearing brush in a corridor 6 feet wide, followed by excavation of and rock to form a level walking surface 2 feet in width and a tread outslope of 1-2 percent. All vegetation and rock removed during trail construction would be hand carried off the trail and spread discretely to avoid piling of plant, soil, and rock. The trail would maintain a sustained grade of 8 percent with short pitches of up to 13 percent. These factors would provide a user friendly trail for hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders with limited erosion. Trail construction would remove 0.18 acres of wildlife and plant habitat and may result in the loss of some individual plants, but would not affect any known plant populations. All viable cacti, ocotillo, and yucca would be replanted onto the portion of the unauthorized trail that is proposed to be reclaimed. Large plants that cannot be easily moved by hand would be transplanted within 30 feet of the proposed trail. Grazing of horses along the trail would be prohibited. Trail construction would be limited to the authorized, pre-mapped route to avoid nearby sites of cultural and biological significance. To avoid the nesting season of migratory birds the trail would be constructed between September 1 and March 15. If construction occurs outside of these dates a bird nest survey would be conducted prior to the beginning of construction.

Reclamation of the existing unauthorized trail would be completed by DSOCS volunteers and BLM staff to navigate non-motorized users away from the wilderness boundary and a spring of tribal and biological significance. This spring, along with many other springs in the Mount Tipton area, is of significance to both the Hualapai Tribe and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. Natural reclamation and soil aeration would be assisted by raking soil, small rocks, and loose vegetation onto the existing trail surface. Rock cairns directing trail travelers to the unauthorized route would be removed and rocks would be dispersed off the trail. The reclaimed trail would be monitored by the BLM Park Ranger for unauthorized use and progress towards natural reclamation. If use of the reclaiming route continues, signage directing users to the authorized trail would be placed at the trailhead and at the intersection of the authorized and reclaiming trail.

Non-motorized recreational opportunities would exist on the trail year-round. The existing BLM bulletin board would be available to the DSOSC to display BLM approved natural and cultural resource based educational information. DSOSC would be responsible for ongoing trail maintenance as well as providing ideas and funding for any future trail interpretation to the BLM. The monitoring of the trail for the presence of exotic/invasive weeds by BLM staff, volunteers and the public would minimize the potential for weed introduction. Trail maintenance would be ongoing for the life of the trail. The Hualapai Tribe and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe were consulted with on proposed trail construction and reclamation actions and had no substantive comment. Proposed trail reclamation and construction efforts would begin in the summer of 2012.

DESCRIPTION OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the no action alternative, the new non-motorized trail would not be created and no action would be taken to reclaim the existing unauthorized trail.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Antelope Canyon lies northeast of the Dolan Springs, Arizona city limits in the northern-most portion of Mount Tipton Wilderness. Access to the proposed trail would be from an unnamed jeep trail that runs south of 15th Street on the east side of Pierce Ferry Road.

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the KFO Project Scoping Form found in the Administrative Record for this proposal. Resources of concern that are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis will not be discussed here. Resources which could be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives are discussed below.

This section describes the existing conditions of the environment and expected impacts. The table below summarizes the resources reviewed for this project. Resources not present within the project study area, as well as those present and not affected, are not discussed. Those resources that have been identified by an interdisciplinary team as present and potentially affected are discussed further below.

PROJECT RESOURCE review			
Resources Considered	Not Present	Present and Not Affected	Present and/or Potentially Affected
Air Quality*	X		
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*	X		
Cultural and Historic*		X	
Environmental Justice* / Socioeconomics	X		
Floodplains*	X		
Grazing	X		
Hazardous or Solid Waste*	X		
Invasive and Non-native Species*	X		
Land Use	X		
Migratory Birds*			X
Native American Religious Concerns*		X	
Prime and Unique Farmland*	X		
Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E)*		X**	
Vegetation			X
Visual Resources	X		
Water Quality*	X		
Wetland or Riparian Zones*			X
Wild and Scenic Rivers*	X		
Wilderness*	X		
Wildlife			X
* Consideration Required By Law or Executive Order			

**There is no designated critical habitat or T&E species found within the project area with the exception that the project area occurs within the experimental range of the endangered California condor.

Present and Not Affected

Cultural and Historic Ground disturbance would only be allowed along the pre-authorized proposed trail location, therefore there would be no impacts to nearby cultural resources. Reclamation of the existing unauthorized trail and construction of the proposed trail would protect significant cultural sites by re-directing trail users away from the significant spring.

Native American Religious Concerns The proposed action location is within a significant tribal region for both the Hualapai Tribe and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. BLM initiated a 45 day comment period under Section 106 consultation with both tribes, but received no substantive comments on the proposed actions. Therefore, Native American Religious Concerns would not be affected by proposed actions.

Threatened and Endangered Species - California condor - It has been determined that there would be “no effect” to the California condor from implementation of the Proposed Action or any of the alternatives. There are no records of condors within or near the project area; the project area is located over 100 miles from a high active area for the condors (Grand Canyon National Park, South Rim); there are no known historical, occupied, condor roost sites within the area. Given the small amount of roosting and perching habitat, the known concentrations of condors, the small number of condors, the lack of habitat for condors, and the static levels of big game on this allotment (foraging opportunities for condors), it is determined that proposed trail construction and reclamation actions would have no effect to this species.

Present and/or Potentially Affected

Migratory Birds Multiple species of migratory birds occur along the proposed trail. 0.18 acres of nesting habitat would be lost due to new trail construction. An approximate equal amount would be reclaimed. It is expected that it would take ten to twenty years for the old trail to fully return to its pre-trail conditions of plant cover, composition, and density.

Migratory birds selectively use springs and the associated riparian/wetland vegetation. They use these areas disproportionately to their occurrence on the landscape for nesting, resting, watering, and foraging. Allowing the spring to reach “proper functioning condition” (Prichard 2003, pg 5) would improve habitat for these species and provide for opportunities for birds to fully use these areas.

Vegetation Approximately 0.18 acres of vegetation would be permanently cleared along the proposed trail. All viable cacti, yucca, and ocotillo would be replanted to the unauthorized trail to aid and speed reclamation of this area. The grazing of horses used by recreationist would be prohibited in this area preventing additional impacts to vegetation adjacent to the trail.

Wetlands and Riparian Zones The reclamation of the existing unauthorized trail would reduce and possibly prevent high non-motorized user traffic near the significant spring site. This would reduce the trampling of riparian/wetland vegetation caused by the current level of use by horseback riders and hikers. This would allow the spring to reach the BLM health standard for springs of “properly functioning condition”.

Proper Functioning Conditions – Lentic riparian-wetland areas are functioning properly when adequate vegetation, landform, or debris is present to: dissipate energies associated with wind action, wave action, and overland flow from adjacent sites, thereby reducing erosion and improving water quality; filter sediment and aid floodplain development; improve flood-water retention and ground-water recharge; develop root masses that stabilize islands and shoreline features against cutting action; restrict water percolation; develop diverse ponding characteristics *to provide* the habitat and the water depth, duration, and temperature necessary for fish production, water-bird breeding, and other uses; and support greater biodiversity (Prichard 2003, pg 5).

Wildlife Multiple species of wildlife occur along the proposed routes and the passing of people would cause some minor disturbances, but since the proposed trail would be limited to the authorized, pre-mapped route and people would be prohibited from chasing or harassing wildlife any impact would be less than one hour in time and would not affect the ability of the wildlife populations to survive in this area. Some wildlife may be temporarily displaced (up to 7 days) by human presence and the noise of trail construction, but wildlife use would resume normal activity after trail construction is complete making any present and potential affects to

wildlife short term.

Impacts from the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, a new trail would not be constructed, the unauthorized trail would not be reclaimed and non-motorized recreation opportunities would remain dispersed in Antelope Canyon. Under this alternative, the unauthorized trail would continue to allow non-motorized user's access to the spring of cultural and biological significance, therefore preventing the spring from meeting BLM health standard for springs of "properly functioning condition".

Cultural – Non-motorized user-traffic (horseback riding and hiking) near the spring of cultural significance would continue to occur. Tribal and cultural resources would continue to be impacted by users of the unauthorized trail.

Wetlands and Riparian Zones- Non-motorized user traffic (horseback riding and hiking) near and within the biologically significant spring site would continue to occur. The spring source and obligate riparian vegetation would continue to be trampled by horses and hikers. The spring would not meet the BLM health standard for springs of "properly functioning condition".

Cumulative Impacts

There would be no cumulative impacts of trail construction to migratory birds, vegetation, wetlands and riparian zones, T&E species or sensitive cultural sites as long as the non-motorized recreationists remain on the authorized proposed trail. Cumulative impacts of the proposed action would provide the opportunity for the spring to reach BLM health standards of springs for "properly functioning condition" and protect cultural and tribal resources.

DESCRIPTION OF MITIGATION MEASURES AND RESIDUAL IMPACTS:

Design features built into the proposed action would eliminate the need for any further mitigation measures.

REFERENCES:

- Bureau of Land Management. 1995. Kingman Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Kingman, AZ
- Prichard, Don. 2003. Riparian Area Management: A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lentic Areas. Technical Reference 1737-16. Bureau of Land Management National Applied Resources Sciences Center. Denver, CO.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Bureau of Land Management
Tim Watkins, Archaeologist
Rebecca Peck, Wildlife Biologist
Len Marceau, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Ramone McCoy, Wilderness Specialist

Tribes Consulted

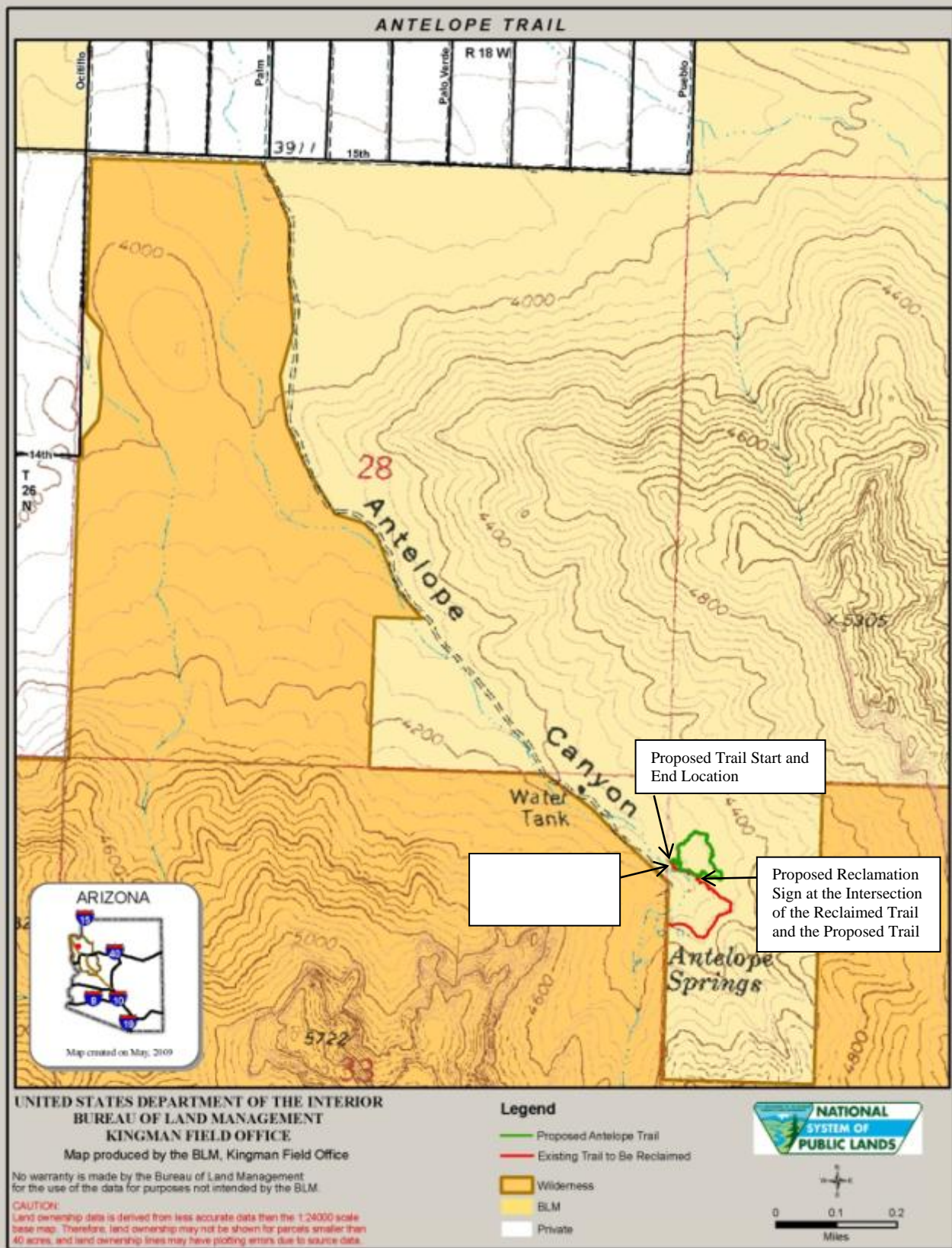
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe

Hualapai Tribe

Preparer(s): Amanda Deeds

Environmental Coordinator: Ramone McCoy

Attachment 1: Proposed Project Map



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

KINGMAN FIELD OFFICE

**KFO ANTELOPE CANYON TRAIL
NEPA# DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2011-0051-EA**

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the discussion of environmental impacts. I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The potential impacts that have been identified are localized and are of relatively short duration. No off-site, indirect or cumulative impacts were identified. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan.

/ s / Ruben A. Sánchez
Ruben Sanchez
Field Manager
Kingman Field Office

8/29/2012
Date

DECISION RECORD

KINGMAN FIELD OFFICE

KFO ANTELOPE CANYON TRAIL NEPA# DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2011-0051-EA

It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2011-0051-EA. This decision will result in the construction and maintenance of one non-motorized trail and the reclamation of one unauthorized trail.

Monitoring of this work will be performed by the recreation staff of the Kingman Field Office.

Rationale:

My decision to approve the Proposed Action analyzed in DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2011-0051-EA is based on the following:

The Proposed Action has been analyzed, with no significant impacts anticipated, as stated in the FONSI signed on August 28, 2012, thus an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The environmental assessment adequately covers all affected resource values.

Implementation of the proposed action provides trail users with a safe, well defined trail that reduces the impacts to cultural sites, migratory birds, and to wetland and riparian sites (a spring) created by the current unauthorized trail. The proposed action would provide the opportunity for the spring to return to BLM land health standards of being in “proper functioning condition” (Prichard 2003, pg 5) while still meeting the needs of local recreational user groups.

Alternatives Considered:

Proposed Action: Construct and maintain an approximately half mile loop interpretive nature trail and reclaim an existing unauthorized half mile trail that is currently unmaintained. The new trail is proposed to start from the visitor registration/parking area of the Antelope Canyon access to Mount Tipton Wilderness approximately four miles northeast of Dolan Springs, Arizona. The trail would make a small loop on BLM lands, outside of Mount Tipton Wilderness before returning to its origin at the existing bulletin board and visitor register (Refer to Attachment 1). Trail construction would include clearing brush in a corridor 6 feet wide, followed by excavation of and rock to form a level walking surface 2 feet in width and a tread outslope of 1-2 percent. All vegetation and rock removed during trail construction would be hand carried off the trail and spread discretely to avoid piling of plant, soil, and rock. The trail would maintain a sustained grade of 8 percent with short pitches of up to 13 percent. These factors would provide a user friendly trail for hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders with limited erosion. Trail construction would remove 0.18 acres of wildlife and plant habitat and may result in the loss of some individual plants, but would not affect any known plant populations. All viable cacti, ocotillo, and yucca would be replanted onto the portion of the unauthorized trail that is proposed to be reclaimed. Large plants that cannot be easily moved by hand would be transplanted within 30 feet of the proposed trail. Grazing of horses along the trail would be prohibited. Trail construction would be limited to the authorized, pre-mapped route to avoid nearby sites of cultural and biological significance. To avoid the nesting season of migratory birds the trail would be constructed between September 1 and March 15. If construction occurs outside of these dates a bird nest survey would be conducted prior to the beginning of construction.

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No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the new proposed non-motorized trail would not be created and no action would be taken to reclaim the existing unauthorized trail.

Appeals:

In accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 2931.8(a) and (b), if you are adversely affected by this decision, you may appeal the decision under Title 43 CFR, Part 4 and Part 1840. This decision will go into effect immediately and will remain in effect while appeals are pending unless a stay is granted under 43 CFR 4.21(b).

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Approved By:

/ s / Ruben A. Sánchez
Ruben Sanchez
Field Manager
Kingman Field Office

8/29/2012
Date